

that he could defend and sell gaming on reservations very easily as part of Indian sovereignty. He said he had vigorously defended on-reservation gaming both as Governor and Secretary; however, off-reservation gaming is different. He said the Department must be very careful about approving off-reservation casinos if local community conflicts cannot be resolved.

He conceded that there had not been a public articulation of this position prior to the Hudson case. He said there were not a lot of these applications. He was unaware of any time when the Department had to take a policy position about off-reservation gaming prior to Hudson. He said applications were handled on a case-by-case basis.

Babbitt said he was aware of an application to DOI by the Mashantucket Pequot tribe to take land into trust for use as a parking lot for the tribe's casino, which had been established prior to his arrival as Secretary. Babbitt said he probably first became aware of the parking lot issue through a phone call from Sen. Dodd. It is also possible that he got a call from Sen. Lieberman. Both calls would have been placed to him personally. He did not recall when Dodd called, but he said that the issue was ongoing and "heated enough for a United States Senator to become involved."<sup>409</sup> He said he does not recall when the Department decided to treat the application as a non-gaming land acquisition. Babbitt denied any recollection of being contacted by other public officials on this matter. He said he was aware there was a big letter-writing campaign by the local officials, but he neither saw the letters nor met with any local officials.

Babbitt said he discussed the Pequot issue with President Clinton, but only months after Interior made its May 1995 decision in that matter. He did not recall when the conversation

---

<sup>409</sup>OIC Babbitt Int. at 2.